

Article - Criminal Law

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§5–601.1.

(a) A police officer shall issue a citation to a person who the police officer has probable cause to believe has committed a violation of § 5–601 of this part involving the use or possession of the civil use amount of cannabis or the personal use amount of cannabis.

(b) (1) A violation of § 5–601 of this part involving the use or possession of the civil use amount of cannabis or the personal use amount of cannabis is a civil offense.

(2) Adjudication of a violation under § 5–601 of this part involving the use or possession of the civil use amount of cannabis or the personal use amount of cannabis:

(i) is not a criminal conviction for any purpose; and

(ii) does not impose any of the civil disabilities that may result from a criminal conviction.

(c) (1) A citation issued for a violation of § 5–601 of this part involving the use or possession of the civil use amount of cannabis or the personal use amount of cannabis shall be signed by the police officer who issues the citation and shall contain:

(i) the name, address, and date of birth of the person charged;

(ii) the date and time that the violation occurred;

(iii) the location at which the violation occurred;

(iv) the fine that may be imposed;

(v) a notice stating that prepayment of the fine is allowed, except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection; and

(vi) a notice in boldface type that states that the person shall:

1. pay the full amount of the preset fine; or

2. request a trial date at the date, time, and place established by the District Court by writ or trial notice.

(2) If a citation for a violation of § 5–601 of this part involving the use or possession of the civil use amount of cannabis or the personal use amount of cannabis is issued to a person under the age of 21 years, the court shall summon the person for trial.

(d) The form of the citation shall be uniform throughout the State and shall be prescribed by the District Court.

(e) (1) The Chief Judge of the District Court shall establish a schedule for the prepayment of the fine.

(2) Prepayment of a fine shall be considered a plea of guilty to a Code violation.

(3) A person described in subsection (c)(2) of this section may not prepay the fine.

(f) (1) A person may request a trial by sending a request for trial to the District Court in the jurisdiction where the citation was issued within 30 days of the issuance of the citation.

(2) If a person other than a person described in subsection (c)(2) of this section does not request a trial or prepay the fine within 30 days of the issuance of the citation, the court may impose the maximum fine and costs against the person and find the person is guilty of a Code violation.

(g) The issuing jurisdiction shall forward a copy of the citation and a request for trial to the District Court in the district having venue.

(h) (1) The failure of a defendant to respond to a summons described in subsection (c)(2) of this section shall be governed by § 5–212 of the Criminal Procedure Article.

(2) If a person at least 21 years old fails to appear after having requested a trial, the court may impose the maximum fine and costs against the person and find the person is guilty of a Code violation.

(i) In any proceeding for a Code violation under § 5–601 of this part involving the use or possession of the civil use amount of cannabis or the personal use amount of cannabis:

(1) the State has the burden to prove the guilt of the defendant by a preponderance of the evidence;

(2) the court shall apply the evidentiary standards as prescribed by law or rule for the trial of a criminal case;

(3) the court shall ensure that the defendant has received a copy of the charges against the defendant and that the defendant understands those charges;

(4) the defendant is entitled to cross-examine all witnesses who appear against the defendant, to produce evidence or witnesses on behalf of the defendant, and to testify on the defendant's own behalf, if the defendant chooses to do so;

(5) the defendant is entitled to be represented by counsel of the defendant's choice and at the expense of the defendant; and

(6) the defendant may enter a plea of guilty or not guilty, and the verdict of the court in the case shall be:

(i) guilty of a Code violation;

(ii) not guilty of a Code violation; or

(iii) probation before judgment, imposed by the court in the same manner and to the same extent as is allowed by law in the trial of a criminal case.

(j) (1) The defendant is liable for the costs of the proceedings in the District Court.

(2) The court costs in a Code violation case under § 5–601 of this part involving the use or possession of the civil use amount of cannabis or the personal use amount of cannabis in which costs are imposed are \$5.

(k) (1) The State's Attorney for any county may prosecute a Code violation under § 5–601 of this part involving the use or possession of the civil use amount of cannabis or the personal use amount of cannabis in the same manner as prosecution of a violation of the criminal laws of the State.

(2) In a Code violation case under § 5–601 of this part involving the use or possession of the civil use amount of cannabis or the personal use amount of cannabis, the State's Attorney may:

(i) enter a nolle prosequi or move to place the case on the stet docket; and

(ii) exercise authority in the same manner as prescribed by law for violation of the criminal laws of the State.

(l) A person issued a citation for a violation of § 5–601 of this part involving the use or possession of the civil use amount of cannabis or the personal use amount of cannabis who is under the age of 18 years shall be subject to the procedures and dispositions provided in Title 3, Subtitle 8A of the Courts Article.

(m) A citation for a violation of § 5–601 of this part involving the use or possession of the civil use amount of cannabis or the personal use amount of cannabis and the official record of a court regarding the citation are not subject to public inspection and may not be included on the public website maintained by the Maryland Judiciary if:

(1) the defendant has prepaid the fine;

(2) the defendant has pled guilty to or been found guilty of the Code violation and has fully paid the fine and costs imposed for the violation;

(3) the defendant has received a probation before judgment and has fully paid the fine and completed any terms imposed by the court;

(4) the case has been removed from the stet docket after the defendant fully paid the fine and completed any terms imposed by the court;

(5) the State has entered a nolle prosequi;

(6) the defendant has been found not guilty of the charge; or

(7) the charge has been dismissed.

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